

My Thinking

Self-Coaching Guide

How can I improve the quality of my thinking?

Our thoughts are intricately linked to our feelings and behaviours. So, particular thoughts and emotions can influence each other which, in turn, can lead to certain behaviours. [See SCG – ‘How can I control my reactions better?’, SCG – ‘How can I control my thoughts better?’, SCG – ‘How can I handle my feelings better?’]

Neuroscience has shown that to improve the quality of our thinking, and therefore our behaviour, we need to address the physiological responses that come from our various biological systems and their impact on our feelings. We can best achieve this by reducing the variability of our heart rate through regulating our breathing. Generating a rhythmic breathing pattern increases the power output of our heart and causes the other biological systems to synchronise with it, stabilising our physiology. The conscious control of breathing has been taught in many disciplines over many years, including sport, yoga, and meditation.

The three most important factors that influence heart rate variability have been shown to be:

- 1) **Rhythm** – a fixed ratio of in-to-out breathing
- 2) **Smoothness** – even flow rate of in and out breathing
- 3) **Location of attention** – a particular focus on our heart area when breathing

The benefits of stabilising our physiology include:

- Being more self-controlled in emotionally-charged situations, and being less reactive
- Enabling us to think more clearly and perceptively, and being less impulsive
- Increasing our ability to actually change how we feel, and being less driven by our emotions

Although the **BREATHE** technique (see diagram) is simple and easy to use, it does require some practice. Practising for a few minutes each day alone with our eyes closed and then working up to more challenging situations is an effective approach. Using a phone app like [Breathe \(by Jatra\)](#) is very helpful in guiding our breathing into a steady rhythm.

Using the BREATHE technique for only a few minutes enables us to be less reactive, have more energy, and brings our thoughts, feelings and behaviours under our control.

*“If you can rhythmically slow down your breath to four breaths a minute,
you can indirectly control your mind and slow it down from its obnoxious behavior.”*
Harbhajan Singh Yogi



More Information

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